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November 18, 1966

Dr. Robert H. Bahmer
Archivist of the United States
Washington 25, D.C.

Dear Dr. Bahmer,

Thank you for your letters of November 14 in response to my earlier inquiries.

With respect to the autopsy documents, because there is no existing body to which I can address myself, I want to register with you, as their custodian, my strong belief that as a minimum condition of even willingness to accept them, the now-missing chain of possession and evidence must exist. I do this also as a matter of record. When the decision I requested is reached, there is also further information about them I will want to record and in which I believe you will have an interest.

With respect to the Zapruder film, following my letter I discussed this with Mr. Johnson. You will recall I also discussed this with you. There may be some question of frames 208, 209 and 211, but there cannot be about the others for they are printed by the Commission. I agreed to accept these alone to make no problem for you. As a matter of fact, you have already established a precedent by providing me with what is represented as a copy of Frame 210. Your have in addition followed the same precedent with the fifth frame of the Willis slides.

The entire Zapruder film, intact, is in evidence as Exhibit 904. From this I believe each and every frame of it should be available. Frames 171 through 334 are in evidence as Exhibit 885 in a 35mm slide version. I have reproduced page 19 of Volume 18, which contains Frames 207 and what is represented as Frame 212 but in actuality is part of Frame 212 spliced to part of Frame 208.

These items of evidence have already been published by the Commission and by others besides me. What I want is not the Life version but the official exhibit version which I cannot, in any event, get from anyone but you. I do not believe youmcan properly deny it to me.

You will recall that when I desired access to what was not published, I first sought and obtained the permission of the copyright owner. In this case there is no parallel because publication has occurred, because Zahnreyfelt's testimony identifies Exhibit 885 as of his manufacture and because the official records of which you are custodian show that Exhibit 904 is, in fact, as you have already written me, a copy made by the FBI of a copy of the original Zapruder film. In this connection, I want to call to your attention an apparent discrepency between your letter of November 14 on this subject and that of July 6, unless I misunderstand your letters and the testimony. Exhibit 904 is not identical with the Life film, whether it is one of the original copies or a copy made of an earlier copy. I am also interested in the reported existence of a second version of this film in the archive, described to me as having a splice.

At the time of my examination of this film, I was told it was the only 8mm version in your custody. Your projectionist made a careful physical examination of it at my request and under my observation. It disclosed no splice.

I should like to examine this second version, the one with the splice. I understand you are reluctant to have it projected. This being the case I should like permission to examine it on an "editor" of excellent quality, sold under the trade name "Craig", by Kelart. This film can thus be moved slowly and without heat and can be examined by the individual frame. Of course, the actual operation would be by your technicians. I would also like to know, to the degree you can trace it, the history of this additionalx version.

May I call to your attention the fact that under the provisions of the Acting Attorney General's order of October 31, there should be in your custody not fewer than two 8mm versions of this film, both identifiable as having been made in Dallas at the order of Mr. Zapruder (what I earlier referred to as from Life, which had purchased the film from Mr. Zaprduer) and not fewer than at least one intact copy that, according to the testimony, was made by the FBI from a copy of the original "loaned" it by the FBI. I should like to know how many copies of this Zapruder film there are, in all, in the archive, and the antecedents of each.

Please accept my assurances that this is not frivolity on my part, nor intended to add to the burden of your staff. It has serious purposes.

In order to minimize the possible inconvenience to your staff, I shall try and arrange for examination of the 16 mm version on your movieola at the same time I study the 8 mm version. Does this movieola accomodate 8 mm film?

To help you trace this film, both original copies were in the possession of the Secret Service, as I recall the testimony.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg